

PLOT TO CATCH A WIRE THEIF

The Electrician Tells Another Interesting Story.

HOW HE ACTED DETECTIVE.

A Series of Lamps Acted as Signals, and a Hard Ride on the Wheel Resulted in an Ugly Spill—The Thief Met His Death.

The electrician felt a little sleepy as he leaned back in one of the big chairs in the lobby of the Lexington. He yawned and then crossed his legs. He took out his watch, and observing the hour started to button up his coat preparatory to going out.

Several of the gang gathered about him and asked for a story. This is what he told:

Superintendent Baskerville was considerably exercised over the depredations of a wire-thief, who for about a week had been making nightly raids on the wires of the Truxton Electric Co., and I, his assistant came in for full share of sleepless nights from the same cause. The fellow whose thieving caused me much inconvenience besides the actual loss of valuable wire seemed well posted as to the minutiae of the plant, and was evidently an expert climber and cunning thief; for although a close watch had been set on our pole lines since he first made his appearance, he had not only escaped, but had a glimpse of him; nor had any trace of the stolen property been found, for which an exhaustive search had been instituted.

Besides the special force detailed to patrol our lines, the superintendent armed two inspectors and his assistant, whose duties necessitated their taking two trips a night over the entire arc system, with orders to keep a strict lookout and report any suspicious characters loitering in the vicinity of our wires, but the stealing continued with provoking regularity, every night a section of wire disappearing, first in one and then another of the outlying districts.

That the thief should be so successful in evading our patrol together with the fact that he was familiar enough with our circuit to steer clear of the live wires was a puzzle to me.

BUT THE FELLOW GOT AWAY

led me to believe that one of our own men was implicated if not entirely responsible for our losses, but rather than throw any unjust suspicion on any one I decided to keep my own counsel and work on the case independently.

A HAPPY IDEA

This, my position with the company enabled me to do, but how to cover some twenty or twenty-five miles of pole-line without assistance for sometime proved a stumbling-block to my ambitious project of capturing the thief alone and unaided. At last struck the happy idea, which finally and effectively put a stop to the thieving, but in a way I had not calculated upon, and in fact would have hesitated to adopt, had I foreseen the result. Our plant was situated very nearly in the center of the town, from which our wires radiated like the spokes of a wheel, if not as symmetrically, and consisted of high voltage alternators, railway generators, and are machines of many types and descriptions, the majority of them added from time to time as the public confidence in the safety and efficiency of the electric light increased.

The latest comers were the railway generators, which were put in when the old mile cars were abandoned and new machines obtained for operating the roads electrically and which under the new order of things took in the several suburbs. It was these suburban lines that had become interesting of late through the operations of the wire-thief and to protect which every effort was being made; it was to the plant, however, that I first gave my attention.

When the switchboard I fixed up with the aid of a number of lamps and some rubber covered wire a detector or tell-tale, connecting one lamp in series with each circuit and through a switch to a small transformer on the all-night service line, of course, this detector was not to be thrown while the lines were in use, but at night, when the current was out, closing the switch would light up the lamps brilliantly. As the electric current had to pass through the detector, the cutting of any line would extinguish the lamp on that line and thus indicate, not only that the wires were being tampered with, but which line was in trouble.

I was thoroughly familiar with the route of each circuit and after completing my work on the indicator, and eating a light supper, sat down opposite the apparatus to smoke a pipe and wait for the thief. My wheel was at the door and I had already slipped a revolver into my pocket. The night was cloudy, and no doubt I would soon get the signal for which I was waiting as eagerly as an angler waits for a nibble.

Well, it came—lamp on No. 11 circuit flickered an instant and then went out. It did not take me many seconds to reach my wheel, mount, and ride off, peering as though my life depended upon it.

Circuit No. 11 went up through the main street of the town for about a mile and a quarter and then turned east and down the prettier drive-way imaginable; a hard, smooth, well kept road with scattering trees on either side with their green lawns and handsome shade trees, but I did not see them that trip; my eyes were fastened on our pole-line, which ran along on the left of the road and every moment as I spun onward I was expecting to surprise the thief at his work.

I suppose I had ridden about three miles when I reached a sharp decline and saw before me a dark object on the cross-arm of the third pole from the bottom of the hill.

A BAD FALL

Throwing my feet on the coasters, I reached for my revolver. Giving my wheel a shove, I fairly flew; the pole was not so high as I spun onward I was expecting to surprise the thief at his work. A moment later I was picking myself up badly scared and stunned, and in time to see a tall lank form slide down the pole and make off up the road. Ten lamps to go, I thought to myself, but I had caught the cause of my fall. I had caught the thief as he worked, but unfortunately for me, had run afoul of a lot of wire he had cut and thrown

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NEW PHONE, 521, OLD, 205

Into the road; it took some time to remove the wire, which was tightly wound around the axle of my front wheel and sprocket. Even when freed of the wire I found the frame so badly bent as to make it impossible to ride, leaving me no alternative but to walk back to the plant; a long and painful undertaking, but I reached there in time to cut the tell-tale clear of the lines before the morning force came to duty.

Too sore to attempt another such ride the following night, I decided to report my exploits to the superintendent and get his advice and assistance; this I did and was much pleased at the interest he evinced in my scheme, but I could not join in his hearty laugh at my "hors de combat," nor had I yet appreciated the humorous side of my mishap.

ALL NIGHT WATCH. After a good day's rest I felt better and at midnight was again at my post ready for an all-night's vigil if necessary, the two men detailed by the superintendent to assist me were in the open doorway, while I had taken up a position behind the switchboard so as to watch the tell-tale lamps. Both men were splendid wheelmen, and I envied them the excitement of the ride, but the hours dragged by one by one with wearisome monotony and yet no sign from the tell tale; after a while the men stopped playing and became fatigued, and I sat there highly entertained by the story of narrow escapes from death by wire and grotesque interludes with humor and pathos, exaggerated in the telling, no doubt, but highly interesting to me.

Gradually the stories became less frequent and finally ceased altogether and the place of the suspicious but that followed a quiet of gentle snores was heard; I did not wake the sleepers, but sat there, my thought turning back to a time three years ago, when I, a newly-graduated electrical engineer, stood at the foot of the main trunk line of the city, looking at the dear old village for more active fields.

A LITTLE MEMORY. The future, to my experience, was bright and smooth and its outlook lessened to some extent the pain of parting, but nevertheless there was a lump in my throat when train time arrived and I drove off with all my belongings in a hair trunk in the back of the wagon.

It had been a long time since then and I had received many hard knocks in the fight, but that parting was still dear and my memory of it was as fresh as when I left. I had a sweet face, all smiles, yet with a suspicion of tears in her eyes like the sun shining through an April shower; and the old house with its gable roof just peeping through the trees; how clearly it all comes back to me. I sat up with a start and rubbed my eyes; the day engineer was shaking me by the shoulder, I too had been asleep, but it was still early with only a lazy grayness to mark the dawn of day. I did not know how long I slept, but the lights of the tell-tale were still burning, so no wires had been cut.

With another night's watching and dis-appointment I was worn out and dis-appointing. I was waiting until the machines were started and the first car sent out; I went home to breakfast and to bed; that is such was my intention, but I had hardly taken my seat at the table when the telephone rang and I was called back to the plant.

A DEAD THIEF. Duty first is my motto and though hungry and tired I hastened off to find on my arrival the body of one of our line men lying stretched out on the engine room floor. Motorman Jennings, who took the first car over the Rivermont branch, had found the man lying face downwards at the foot of one of our poles near the end of the line. The treatment for severe electric shocks is the same as for a case of drowning without the barrel rolling, but although we worked faithfully and used every effort to coax back his life it was of no avail.

We greatly regretted the man's death, but there was no doubt that we had at last caught the thief. If any doubt had existed it was soon dispelled when among a number of papers in his pocket we found a letter to his father for over a thousand pounds of copper wire.

At first we were at a loss to account for the man's death, but the superintendent, in looking over the lines, found a cross between one of our 2,000 volt alternators and a power wire; as this was connected through my apparatus to the railway feeders the whole system had become live, and my harmless tell-tale had become a deadly trap.

Gustavo Salvini, who is as great a worshiper of Shakespeare as his father, is not content with playing Hamlet and other Shakespeare parts—he is also lecturing on "Hamlet." He has a particular liking for lago, and his demonstration of the part is very fine. By his study and tenacity Gustavo Salvini is now the greatest classic actor in Italy—I might say the only classic actor in Italy. Even his father admits that; he was so much against his son adopting the stage as a profession—Rome letter in Dramatic Mirror.

1900ALMANAC 1900
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Social and Personal.

(Continued From Eleventh Page.)

Her husband was the commander of seven companies, who volunteered their services to the Confederacy, but there were many obstacles to be overcome as it seemed impossible for Virginia and the other States to render their assistance as they were overtaxed for their own troops and the case of the Marylanders seemed hopeless as Captain Johnson, whose idea was that Maryland should be represented in the Confederacy, was unwilling that his boys should be mustered into the Army of Virginia. The outlook for these brave lads was dark and unpromising as they were unable to obtain arms. It being obvious that unless speedy action was taken the men who were on the verge of disbanding would join other companies, Mrs. Johnson made herself equal to the occasion and by a heroic effort was successful in keeping the Marylanders together. She determined to make her way through the hostile lines to North Carolina and solicit aid for them. Accompanied by Lieutenant George M. Spearer and Captain Nicholas as her escort she started by the way of Annapolis, but discovered that the route occupied by the Federals, she then went by Harper's Ferry and Richmond to Raleigh. The governor and council provided her with five hundred rifles, cartridge boxes and accoutrements and five thousand cartridges and percussion caps, which at this time could not be purchased for less than one dollar a cap. The enthusiastic North Carolinians gave her a public ovation and her name was on the lips and in the heart of every Confederate soldier. Men, women and children, were gathered at every station, to see the Maryland heroine, who was equipping her husband's regiment. Mrs. Johnson was eager to assist the patriotic woman and at Petersburg a purse was given and Governor Letcher gave her uniforms and clothes and she bought tents. Authority was given her to Manassas to obtain all the cartridges she needed and in ten days she had returned to the Maryland camp with her trophies to give her husband's soldier boys and to inspire them by her example for approaching conflict with the Federals. General Jackson most generously contributed to the cause. At Hanover Junction she erected a church at her own expense and stood godmother for those who were baptized and received in the church. She was the "first in peace, first in war and first in the hearts of her countrymen," nor did she ever lose interest in the cause which was so dear to her, as the old flag which had been presented to her after the war by her Maryland boys, should be placed on her casket. A few years ago, while ill in Baltimore, she was visited by a Maryland soldier, who told her that he had been made a prisoner of war by the Federals, and that he had been in the hands of the enemy for a long time. She was so glad to hear of her countrymen that she wrote him a letter, and he returned to her with a letter from the Federals, who had been in the hands of the enemy for a long time.

Miss Phyllis Langhorne is the guest of Mrs. S. Moncreux Perkins.

Miss Nina Stringfield, of Newport News, is the guest of Miss Jessie Bailey.

Owing to the illness of Mr. George L. Currie, the meeting of the St. John's Circle of King's Daughters and Sons will not meet at the residence of Mrs. Currie, but at that of Mrs. Ramon D. Garvin, 2018 east Broad street, on Monday afternoon at 4 o'clock. A full attendance is requested as this will be an important meeting.

Miss Idina Head, of Missouri, was the guest of Dr. and Mrs. Beazley at No. 203 east Broad street, last week.

Mr. A. C. Nickerson and bride, of Boston, were the recipients of many flatterings and congratulations during their stay with Mr. and Mrs. George L. Currie.

Miss Mary Watts Woods, of Charlottesville, is visiting friends in the city.

Miss Lucie Wormeley is the guest of Miss Berkeley at the University of Virginia.

Miss Bertha Dickinson has returned from Baltimore, where she spent the holiday with her parents.

Miss Phyllis Garlin, of Edgewater Park, N. J., is the guest of Dr. and Mrs. Ramon D. Garvin.

Dr. and Mrs. George P. Bagby, who have been visiting relatives in Farmville, have returned to the city.

There will be a called meeting of the Auxiliary of the Homeopathic Free Dispensary on Tuesday afternoon at 4 o'clock at the residence of Miss Hunter Ferguson.

Miss Alice Goodwin has returned from a pleasant visit to her grandmother, Mrs. William Crump, in Albemarle county.

Mr. Pope Nash left last week for the University of Virginia, after spending the holidays with his parents, Rev. and Mrs. Preston Nash in this city.

Miss Nina Randolph left Friday for Charleston, where she will spend a month with friends in that city.

Mr. Thomas Miles May returned last week from Washington, where he visited Mr. Benjamin Lantier Minor.

Mrs. Boyce D. Brooker gave a delightful "at-home" on Thursday afternoon from 4 to 6 o'clock in honor of Mrs. W. J. Sherwin. Mrs. Brooker was gown in black satin duchesse and was assisted in receiving by her niece Miss Marie Lishman in pink tulle and lace and Mrs. W. J. Sherwin in cream lace trimmed with gold and silver.

The front drawing-room was artistically decorated with palms and potted plants, the predominant colors being pink and white, which were also used with beautiful taste in the dining-room, where the table presented an attractive appearance with a handsome centerpiece of Battenberg lace over pink satin and numerous candles with pink shades. Among the callers were Misses M. O. Capers, Sr., Robert Whittey, Jr., George Schoen, Thos. Swain, H. W. Wood, Robert Harlow, Thomas Christian, H. Stuart McLean, Messrs. Annie L. Buchanan, of Brooklyn, N. Y.; Glenn, Gravatt and Geddes-Smith.

Miss Alice O. Lefebvre's cotillon will meet on Tuesday evening, January 3d, at the kindergarten on Floyd avenue.

The last of the series of drawing-room receptions at the Jefferson, which have been such a pleasant feature of the early part of the season, will be held on Thursday afternoon at 5 o'clock. The evening will be devoted to the "Literature and Music of Ireland."

Miss Hunter Ferguson entertained on Thursday evening from 9 to 12 o'clock in honor of Mrs. P. C. Puel, of Brooklyn, N. Y. The guests appeared in costume, and the judges, who were to award the prizes, found the matter a difficult one to decide. Those particularly noticed were Mrs. Dickie, as "baby-waker," Miss Batcher and Mr. Rivers, "Gossam" as a negro belle and groom, Mr. Hartman as "Mephisto," and Mr. Briggs as Cardinal Richelieu. Miss Stringfield made a striking "new woman," and Mr. Mayer, as "Crispites," provoked much merriment. Prizes were received by Mrs. Clarence "Franklin" and Miss Batcher and Messdames Harry Hartman and William Mayer, for correct guessing as to number of masqueraders. At half-past ten o'clock the masques were removed and an elegant collation served. Among those present were: Mr. and Mrs. Walford Hardwick, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Hartman, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Currie, Mr. and Mrs. Wortley Dickie, Mr.

GEO. L. CHRISTIAN, Pres't. W. M. HABLSTON, Vice-President. T. K. SANDS, Cashier. O. S. MORTON, Ass't Cashier.

F. E. NOLTING, S. H. HAWES, R. G. RENNOLDS, ROBT. S. BOSHER, JOHN ADDISON, H. M. VAUGHAN,
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National Bank of Virginia, at Richmond, Va.

Consolidated Sept. 27, 1899, with Citizens Exchange Bank.

CONDENSED STATEMENT CLOSE OF BUSINESS DEC. 31, 1899.

ASSETS.		LIABILITIES.	
Loans and discounts—		Capital.....	\$500,000 00
Time loans.....	\$1,122,441 71	Surplus and undivided profits.....	32,110 82
Call loans.....	394,280 08	Circulation.....	44,990 00
Overdrafts.....	472 26	Interest reserve.....	5,000 00
Banking house and fixtures.....	57,517 34	Tax reserve.....	3,888 30
Treasurer of United States.....	2,250 00	Dividends.....	12,929 49
United States Bonds.....	164,000 00	Bills payable.....	50,000 00
Premium account.....	13,070 00	Deposits.....	1,575,421 07
Stocks and bonds.....	23,803 31		
Due from banks.....	\$280,536 83		
Cash.....	175,968 15		
	456,504 98		
	\$2,224,339 68		\$2,224,339 68

Accounts of Banks, Bankers, Corporations, Firms and Individuals is solicited. We are prepared to furnish depositors every business facility consistent with good banking. Special and prompt attention given to collections.

REPORT OF THE CONDITION

OF THE

Richmond Trust and Safe Deposit Co.,

AT THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS, DECEMBER 30th, 1899,

RESOURCES.		LIABILITIES.	
Time Loans Secured by Collateral.....	\$ 679,019 73	Capital Stock.....	\$1,000,000 00
Demand Loans Secured by Collateral.....	233,835 00	Deposits subject to check.....	\$1,001,573 33
Investments, Bonds, and Stocks.....	932,008 70	Certificates.....	29,732 33
Furniture and Fixtures.....	1 00	Due to Banks and Bankers.....	1,131,605 66
Accrued Interest, Dividends, etc.....	21,769 74	Unpaid Liabilities Account of Investments.....	49,858 88
Cash.....	463,946 17	Undivided Profits.....	25,737 50
	\$2,330,580 34		\$2,330,580 34

JOHN SKELTON WILLIAMS, President.
JAMES H. DOOLEY, FRANK A. DAVENPORT, Vice-Presidents.
H. L. CABELL, Secretary and Treasurer.

The Savings Bank of Richmond,

Corner Main and Eleventh Streets, Richmond, Va.

R. A. PATTERSON, President. L. Z. MORRIS, Vice-President. JAMES M. BALL, Cashier.

DIRECTORS: GEO. L. CHRISTIAN, W. H. ZIMMERMAN, L. Z. MORRIS, O. O. OWENS,
N. D. HARGROVE, F. S. SITTING, F. S. SITTING, JOHN W. GORDON,
H. THEODORE ELLYSON, R. A. PATTERSON, H. ELDON TAYLOR, G. G. VALENTINE.

Capital and Surplus, \$160,000. Deposits received in sums of \$1.00 and upwards. Negotiable paper discounted. On and after April 1, 1900, remove to 1117 east Main street, next door to Hotel Lexington and opposite the office of The Richmond Dispatch.

INVENTORY SALE.

MILLER CHINA CO.

109 East Broad Street, Between First and Second.

Our annual inventory sale commences to-day and will continue for two weeks, which will give you an opportunity to select from our immense stock of

China, Glassware, and Housefurnishing Goods

such bargains as never before offered in this city. Remember, this sale to continue for two weeks only—all goods to be sold at greatly reduced prices for CASH.

Positively no goods charged during this great reduction sale.

Come early and make your selection.

Miller China Company, 109 East Broad. Between 1st and 2d.

IF You Wish Fine Oysters, Fish & Game

Go to the Virginia Fish, Oyster and Game Company, No. 414 north Sixth street, Second Market, New Phone 414, where you will find the best assortment in that line in the city or State, the finest quality and flavored Oysters that is used. Lynn Haven Bay, Blue Point, Cherrystone, Back River, York River and Chesapeake Bay Oysters, fresh and clean, opened daily.

Fresh Fish of All Kinds in Season.
Halibut, Smelts, Fresh Codfish, Striped Bass, Black Bass, Fresh Mackerel, Pompano, Sheepshead, White Perch, Virginia Spots, Blue Fish, Fresh Salmon, Salmon Trout, Etc.

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Pheasant, Quail, Venison, Wild Turkey, Wild Ducks, Rabbits, Squirrels, Snipe, Woodcock, Whole Deer, Live Lobsters, Etc.

VA. FISH, OYSTER & GAME CO., 414 N. 6th St., 2d Market; New Phone, 414.

turned firemen and extinguished the fire. The damage is about \$100.
An alarm was turned in yesterday about 12:15 o'clock from box 17, on the corner of Twenty-eighth and Leigh streets. The fire was in a wood-house and destroyed that building.

BIG GAINS SHOWN.
Business of the Richmond Postoffice Largely Increased.
The increase in the business of the Richmond postoffice is marked and all departments have shared the prosperity.

The receipts for the sale of stamps, cards and envelopes at the local post-office for the month of December, 1899, when compared with the receipts for the corresponding period of 1898, show an increase of \$1,377.04.
The total sales for the month, just ended, was \$21,828.50.

The following is an extract from the report of Superintendent of Delivery of Mails Frank P. Burke made to Postmaster Wray T. Knight, and explains the delay in the delivery of mail in the city.
In presenting my quarterly reports of the special delivery service at this office of the past quarter, ending December 31st, 1899, I have the honor to call your attention to the large increase of the special delivery service.

The total number of Specials received at this office was 5,062. Total number despatched from this office was 12,628.

Making total number of despatches handled, of 17,690.

Amount of compensation paid for special delivery messengers was \$173.40.

For the corresponding quarter of the previous year, the total number of specials received at this office was 5,063.

The total number of despatches was 12,173.

Total number handled, 17,336.

Amount of compensation paid special delivery messengers was \$174.58.

These figures show an increase of 1999 over 1898 of over 12 per cent.

A California woman has patented a machine for gauging and marking ladies' skirts, to insure evenness around the bottom, the skirt being hung on a revolving form, with an adjustable frame on one side, which marks the proper length for trimming.